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## Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: May 7, 1975

SUBJECT: Call on Under Secretary Sisco by Ambassador  
Deng of Sudan

PARTICIPANTS: SUDAN - H.E. Dr. Francis M. DENG,  
Ambassador of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan

UNITED STATES - The Under Secretary for Political  
Affairs

COPIES TO: Wendell B. Coote, Director AF/E  
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### U.S.-Sudanese Relations

After welcoming the Ambassador, Sisco noted, candidly, that the past year had not been an easy one in U.S.-Sudanese relations. Nothing would be gained, however, by recapitulating events of the past. What was important now was that there was a mutual interest in moving ahead and finding ways to make progress on this delicate issue. Sisco thought that both sides had approached the problem with common sense.

Ambassador Deng responded that he "could not agree more" with Sisco's comments. Sudan, he continued, has viewed the difficulties in its relations with the United States with a certain realistic understanding. The basic sentiments of the Sudanese people against the terrorists were quite similar to those of the American people. Feelings ran high in both countries. Sudan and the United States have a long tradition of friendly relations, and both the Sudanese Government and people sincerely desire to maintain and extend these good relations.

Sisco suggested that the two countries try to move forward together on a step-by-step basis, bearing in mind that there are a number of restraints on our part.

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He asked Deng to list Sudan's priorities as to where we go from here.

Although appreciative of the reasons for a step-by-step approach, Deng stressed that the pressures on him for immediate results were great. The most immediate need is for U.S. assistance in agriculture, where world needs are so great. This approach hopefully would include our looking favorably at opportunities for official bilateral assistance as well as for getting the American private sector to go into Sudan. Once the major avenues are opened, there would be significant prospects for business interests. It would be helpful if the U.S. Government could explain to American firms the usefulness of the Sudanese Government as a partner, especially in the agricultural field, and actively encourage such joint ventures.

Turning to Coote, Sisco asked for his views on the next steps in U.S.-Sudanese relations. Coote said that his office had been giving careful consideration to the matter of how best to proceed with the normalization of relations with Sudan. He agreed that because of the sensitivity on this subject which remains among certain elements in this country a step-by-step approach would be much more realistic. He supported Ambassador Deng's desire to stimulate more interest in Sudan on the part of American businessmen. In this connection Coote thought the time had come when we might again authorize EX-IM and OPIC to resume their normal operations in Sudan. A principal result of such an action would be to encourage private U.S. participation in investment projects of interest to the Sudanese.

Sisco asked Ambassador Deng what he thought of such an approach. Deng said he agreed with it. Sisco then asked Coote to discuss the matter further with the Sudanese Ambassador and to keep him (Sisco) informed on the follow-up discussions.

#### Eritrean Situation

Sisco asked the Ambassador to discuss Eritrea in framework of Sudanese interests.

Deng replied that the fact that Ethiopia is a neighbor of Sudan is an important consideration. Sudan does not wish to interfere in the internal affairs of its neighbors, but it would like to play a positive role that is acceptable to Ethiopia.

Digressing a bit, the Ambassador referred to the recent North-South problem in Sudan. He said that Sudan had recently resolved its own cancer--internal strife--in such a way as to give

the country real prospects for stability. For a long time Sudan has taken pride in being both African and Arab, and now it was in a good position to become a useful bridge between the Arabs and the Africans. To the extent that the Sudanese are now included in both circles and have learned a lesson through internal developments, they can play a greater role in Arab-African relationships, given the proper basis for a takeoff.

As in the case of Sudan, the Ambassador continued, there must be an interest on the part of both parties to the Eritrean dispute if there is to be a successful solution of the problem. While humanitarian interests are important, more basic interests must be found. Sudan hopes that its own experience, both the spirit and the mechanism, can be useful in helping Ethiopia resolve the problem and maintain stability. This is what motivated Nimeiri to take the initiative in seeking negotiations between the Ethiopians and Eritreans. Unfortunately the Sudanese effort was initially overplayed publicly, and the two sides took positions prematurely, before any results could be achieved. Now there has been a degree of going underground, and contacts with the two sides are continuing quietly.

Sisco noted that although the situation in Eritrea was presently quiescent, the basic danger remained. He asked how the Ambassador viewed the long-range prospects for settlement.

Deng replied that there were interest groups on both sides which could aggravate confrontation. Interested outsiders, particularly Sudan and the United States, were in a position to conceive strategies which would be helpful in identifying and developing the vital interests involved on both sides, and thus give the people a reason for wanting a settlement. Although both sides might take a negative stand publicly, Sudan believes there is a basis for some harmonization of their interests. The Ambassador asserted that Sudan would like to see unity, in its broad sense, achieved in Ethiopia.

Sisco told the Ambassador that the Sudanese Government had our blessing and support in seeking a peaceful resolution of the Eritrean situation in such a way as not to have a destabilizing effect in the area. Destabilization, he added, would not be helpful to any country in the area.

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